

Dear FCC:

Re: 02-277

If the federal government weakens the rules for media ownership, a few, powerful media companies could gain greater influence over the news Americans depend on mass media -- such as television, newspapers, and radio -- to learn about the news, understand issues, and make informed political choices.

The United States has certain rules for owning American media. These rules put limits on how many media outlets a company can own. Media ownership rules are designed to ensure that one company does not have too much control over the media content available in any community.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently reviewing the rules for media ownership. The FCC may decide to relax or eliminate the rules this year. For instance, the FCC is considering whether to ease the limits on how many TV stations and radio stations a company can own in a market, as well as remove the ban on one company owning a daily newspaper and local television station in the same market.

If the FCC relaxes the rules for media ownership, one company in a community would be able to own the local newspaper, several TV and radio stations, and the cable TV system. There would be fewer owners of networks, stations, and newspapers nationwide. The public's ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints would be compromised. It would likely result in higher costs for businesses that advertise in local media, and those costs would likely be passed onto consumers.

Media ownership rules are essential to a healthy democracy. They help make sure that the public receives a broad range of contrasting perspectives from the media, not just the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates. The rules protect Americans' First Amendment rights to a diverse marketplace of ideas. The stakes for consumers, citizens, and the nation are enormous.

Please do NOT relax media rules.

Sincerely,
Karen Johnson
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